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<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Zhang, Li-Zhi; Gu, Wen; Liu, Xin; Dong, Zhili; Li, Bing</td>
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Solid-state photopolymerization of a photochromic hybrid based on Keggin tungstophosphates†

Li-Zhi Zhang,ab Wen Gu,a Xin Liu,aa Zhili Dongab and Bing Lia

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Reversible photochromism occurring with reversible photopolymerization between 0-D and 1-D under irradiation with sunlight was clarified by X-ray analyses.

Photochromic compounds are a subject of growing interest because of their potential technological applications in the areas of information display devices, solar energy conversion, high-density memory devices, and photoelectric sensors.1 It is well-known that one of the most important properties of polyoxometalates is the capability to accept various numbers of electrons giving rise to mixed-valency colored species (heteropolyblues or heteropolybrowns),2 which make them suitable for photochromic and electrochromic materials.2–4 Since the investigation of inorganic–organic hybrid materials became an expanding field, the preparation, microstructure, and photochromic process of polyoxometalates-based hybrid composites have been extensively investigated.5

On the other hand, despite the inherent strong barriers of simultaneous bond breaking and formation in more than one direction, single-crystal-to-single-crystal (SCSC) transformations in the solid state have been studied widely in recent years.6,7 However, much of the work has focused on thermal-stimulated6 or guest desorption/absorption-induced7 types, while the photo-induced type received less attention.

Herein, we report an interesting discovery of a photo-polymerized SCSC transformation in a photochromic polyoxometalates-based hybrid, [Gd2(NMP)12(PW12O40)]+ [PW12O40] (NMP = N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone) (1), in which reversible photochromism occurred with reversible structural transformation under irradiation with sunlight.

Reaction of GdCl3, H3PW12O40 and NMP in CH3CN/H2O (2 : 1, v/v) followed by slow evaporation at room temperature in the black position resulted in colorless single crystals.‡ X-Ray analyses‡ reveal that compound 1, having a triclinic crystal system, exhibits an ionic, asymmetric structure consisting of the [PW12O40]3− anion and the [Gd2(NMP)12(PW12O40)]+ cation in which either of GdIII ions is coordinated with 6 NMP molecules and connected by [PW12O40]3− (Fig. 1a). The coordination polyhedron of GdIII may be represented as a highly distorted, single-capped trigonal prism (Fig. 2a). The Gd-O bond lengths are within the range from 2.212 to 2.514 Å.

Fig. 1 Process of photochromism and SCSC transformation. (a) Ball and stick and polyhedral representations of 1. The color code is as follows: Gd (yellow), O (red), N (blue), C (gray), WO6 (red), PO4 (purple); (b) ball and stick and polyhedral representations of 2. The color code is as follows: Gd (yellow), O (red), N (blue), C (gray), WO6 (deep-blue), PO4 (purple).

†Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Photographs of samples, and tables of selected bond lengths and angles. See DOI: 10.1039/b718523e. CCDC reference numbers 611433 and 633062. For crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: 10.1039/b718523e.
polyoxometalates, with those well-reported discrete charger-transfer alkylammonium-GdIII may be represented as a distorted, bicapped trigonal prism NMP) type of structure (Fig. 1b). The coordination polyhedron of into NMP+ through O–Gd–O not the hydrogen bond. absorption of photons by the Keggin structure, resulting in the slightly different. A reasonable mechanism should involve the extra intervalence charge transfer (IVCT) (W5+ band at 700 nm in the visible region appeared due to metal-to-metal (anion)M-donor} {\text{[Gd(NMP) 6(PW12O40)]}} subunits and displays an \((\text{anion})\text{M-donor}\) \((\text{M} = \text{Gd}; \text{anion} = \text{PW}12\text{O}40^{−}; \text{donor} = \text{NMP})\) type of structure (Fig. 1b). The coordination polyhedron of \text{Gd}^{\text{III}} may be represented as a distorted, bicapped trigonal prism (Fig. 2b). The Gd–O bond lengths are within the range of 2.255–2.526 Å (mean value 2.359 Å). The torsion angle between the top plane and the bottom plane is 7.29°, which is smaller than that of compound 1 (\(\Delta = 20.60°\)). When we performed the X-ray analyses on the resulted deep blue crystals, unexpectedly, structural transformation occurred in the photochromic hybrid and a new compound belonging to a monoclinic system, \([\text{Gd(NMP)}\text{a}(\text{PW}12\text{O}40)\text{b}]\) (2), was obtained.‡ Compound 2 consists of a 1-D infinite zigzag chain built from alternate polyanions and [Gd(NMP)a]n subunits and displays an \((\text{anion})\text{M-donor}\) \((\text{M} = \text{Gd}; \text{anion} = \text{PW}12\text{O}40^{−}; \text{donor} = \text{NMP})\) type of structure (Fig. 1b). The coordination polyhedron of \text{Gd}^{\text{III}} may be represented as a distorted, bicapped trigonal prism (Fig. 2b). The Gd–O bond lengths are within the range of 2.255–2.526 Å (mean value 2.359 Å). The torsion angle between the top plane and the bottom plane is 7.29°, which is smaller than that of compound 1 (\(\Delta = 20.60°\)).

To further contrast 1 with 2, in the packing framework of 1, we can find a discontinuous zigzag chain (Fig. 4). The distance of adjacent polyanions is 137.77 Å (defined by the \(\text{P}−\text{P}\) separation), which is equal to that in the continuous zigzag chain of 2. The turning angle of \(\text{P}−\text{Gd}−\text{P}\) (104.73°) in 1 is slightly smaller than that (125.81°) in 2 (\(\Delta = 21.08°\); the difference is almost equal to that in the torsion angle of \text{Gd}^{\text{III}} coordination polyhedrons). In addition, the NMP ligands in both 1 and 2 are highly disordered. These structural values and factors provide a potential environment for the SCSC transformation. To further examine the phase purity of this system, X-ray powder diffraction was carried out on 1 and 2, respectively (Fig. 5). A comparison between the experimental pattern and the calculated pattern (based on single-crystal data) shows that both 1 and 2 are pure.

When the crystals of 2 are placed in the air and sheltered from the light, they gradually turn back to their original colorlessness. X-Ray analyses reveal that with the color changes compound 2 simultaneously converts 1-D zigzag chains into original 0-D ionic structures. If color-changed samples are put in nitrogen atmosphere and sheltered from the light, their color does not fade, indicating that the fading process is a chemical one and that it is the oxygen in the air that has reoxidized \(\text{W}^\text{VI}\) into \(\text{W}^\text{V}\), not the self-redox occurring in the system. The whole process might concisely proceed in Fig. 1. Also deserving attention, by heating at 90 °C in air under sunlight, the color and structural reversal also occur in compound 2, which indicates that the reverse SCSC transformation of 2 to 1 can be also considered as a thermal-stimulated type; however, nothing occurs when heating is carried out in nitrogen atmosphere, which further indicates that reverse transformation of 2 to 1 is significantly affected by oxygen.

In summary, a photochromic 12-tungstophosphate-based hybrid has been synthesized, in which a reversible photopolymerization interestingly occurred. To the best of our knowledge, this communication provides the first polyoxometalates-based example of SCSC transformations. Furthermore, it is highly interesting to study the photomagnetism, electrochemistry, and photoelectricity in the system, because there is not only SCSC transformation but also deoxidized \(\text{W}^\text{V}\) atoms under irradiation with sunlight. All this work is currently in progress.
We are thankful for financial support from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (Grants 20371027 and 20071020), the Tianjin Science Foundation (Grant 033609211) and the NTU Research Scholarship.

Notes and references

† Synthesis of compound 1: An aqueous solution (10 mL) containing H2PW12O40·nH2O (1.3 g) and GdCl3·6H2O (0.1487 g; 0.4 mmol) was heated to dryness at 90 °C in a water bath. N-Methyl-2-pyrrolidone (0.5 mL) was then added into the resultant dry solid with stirring until the mixture became a paste. Finally, the paste was dissolved in an acetonitrile/water (2:1, v/v) mixed solution (10 mL). filtered and left standing to concentrate at room temperature in the dark. After a few days, colorless crystals suitable for X-ray analyses were obtained (1.16 g, yield 80%).

Anal. Calcd (%) for C9.9H1.5N12O92P2Gd2W24, M = 7258.42, triclinic, P1, a = 12.119(2) Å, b = 13.598(3) Å, c = 22.210(4) Å, α = 80.328(3)°, β = 85.395(3)°, γ = 67.725(3)°, V = 3338.3(11) Å³, Z = 1, ρcalc = 3.610 g cm⁻³, 2θmax = 50.04° (14 ≤ h ≤ 14, -16 ≤ k ≤ 11, -26 ≤ l ≤ 26), T = 294(2) K, F(000) = 3222, GOF = 1.054, R1 = 0.0536, wR2 = 0.1135. CCDC 614133.

Synthesis of compound 2: When exposed to sunlight for 5 h, crystals of compound 2 completely turned deep blue and produced compound 2. Anal. Calcd (%) for C9.9H1.5N12O92P2Gd12, M = 6444, triclinic, P1, a = 12.811(7) Å, b = 15, c = 26.210(4) Å, α = 90°, β = 107.460(6)°, γ = 90°, V = 6574(5) Å³, Z = 4, ρcalc = 3.667 g cm⁻³, 2θmax = 50.02° (26 ≤ h ≤ 23, -11 ≤ k ≤ 15, -26 ≤ l ≤ 29), T = 294(2) K, F(000) = 6444, GOF = 1.142, R1 = 0.0523, wR2 = 0.1245. CCDC 633062.


